

SANDY BAY REGATTA 175TH ANNIVERSARY
REMARKS BY
HER EXCELLENCY THE HONOURABLE BARBARA BAKER AC
GOVERNOR OF TASMANIA
GOVERNMENT HOUSE, TUESDAY 24 JANUARY 2023

[VICE-REGAL SALUTE IS PLAYED]

Good evening and welcome to this Government House reception to mark the 175th Anniversary of our Sandy Bay Regatta.

I pay my respects to the traditional and original owners of this land: the palawa people. I acknowledge the contemporary Tasmanian Aboriginal community and recognise their continued connection to land, sea, and waters. I acknowledge the impacts of colonisation upon our First People and commit to a future that listens to and respects Aboriginal stories, culture, and history.

May I acknowledge among us:

- The Honourable Elise Archer MP
- Senator Carol Brown
- Adrian Granger, President Sandy Bay Regatta Committee, and fellow Members.

Your Chair, Peter Douglas, unfortunately is unable to attend this evening due to Covid.

Any 175th anniversary is certainly worthy of celebration. This is especially so when we consider how intimately Hobart and the Sandy Bay Regatta are identified with its majestic river and estuary.

In 1998, Sir Guy and Lady Green hosted your 150th anniversary here. It is a privilege that Don and I can host your 175th anniversary this evening. I have fond memories of attending many Sandy Bay Regattas as a child, although one not so fond memory was when I was stuck at the top of the Ferris wheel for what seemed like hours, while mechanics attended to fix it. I must say that I never went on another Ferris wheel!

I am sure your historical records are considerable. Nonetheless, may I mention a few points. Earlier, in the 1840s, Lieutenant-Governor Sir John Franklin inaugurated the Hobart Regatta with a prime purpose of keeping whaleboat men in trim. Whaling was important to our young town's economy.

So, when your first regatta was planned, through a meeting in December 1848, one of the key races was for "a purse of five pounds for competition by the youths at Sandy Bay."¹

Those young men competed in four-oared whaleboats. There were six starters, including: Crocodile; Cupid; Harlequin; Odd Fellow; and Shamrock. Crocodile started last, but I quote: "having pulled up famously",² ended up winning that race.

There were about seven races in all on that first, historic day. A newspaper report stated that, "The constant influx of visitors up to a late period in the afternoon enlivened the appearance of the regatta ground; there must have been near 2000 persons present during the day."³

At a Regatta committee meeting the following December it was resolved to invite the Lieutenant-Governor Sir William Denison to become Patron. It was noted he had "kindly contributed towards its formation last year."⁴ Sir William readily agreed. So began the long 175-year association between the Sandy Bay Regatta and this Vice-Regal office.

By the time of the sixth Regatta in January 1854, Sir William as patron sanctioned a half-holiday for officers of the government. This was followed by the banks, insurance companies, and other establishments, all of which, quote, "gave promise of a right down agreeable holiday."⁵

¹ *Courier* (Hobart), Wednesday 27 December 1848, page 2.

² *Courier* (Hobart), Wednesday 3 January 1849, page 2.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *Colonial Times* (Hobart) Friday 7 December 1849, page 4.

⁵ *Colonial Times* (Hobart), Friday 1 December 1854, page 2.

At this Regatta, His Excellency arrived by barge, whereas Lady Denison came by carriage. His Excellency participated in the eighth boat race of the day and “...got the best start and maintained the lead he thus obtained. There was a protest against him receiving the prize, being it was illegal under the tonnage (15-25 tons.) Perhaps that was an early lesson that Governors should not compete in boat races!⁶

May I conclude by noting again the long association of our Governors and the Sandy Bay Regatta, though not always as patrons. The relationship is nevertheless a significant one. Another Vice-Regal example was in 1953, when Governor Sir Ronald Cross attended the Regatta, and delivered the Australia Day Address.

I shall continue that association this coming Thursday, when I shall have the pleasure of saying a few words at the unveiling of a history marquee and a tree planting, at Long Point, to mark your 175th Anniversary.

Thank you. David ...

[invites Adrian Granger, President, to respond]

⁶<https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/3334447?searchTerm=sandy%20bay%20regata>